

A GAMING MACHINE WITH PLAYER PREDICTABLE VOLATILITY

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] This invention relates to a gaming machine. More particularly, the invention relates to a gaming machine and to an improvement to a game played on such a gaming machine.

BACKGROUND TO THE INVENTION

[0002] Players who regularly play gaming machines quickly tire of particular games and therefore it is necessary for manufacturers of these machines to develop innovative game features which add interest to the games. In so doing, it is hoped to keep players amused and therefore willing to continue playing the game as well as to attract new players.

[0003] Also, with the growth that has occurred in the gaming machine market, there is intense competition between manufacturers to supply various existing and new venues. When selecting a supplier of gaming machines, the operator of a venue will often pay close attention to the popularity of various games with their patrons. Therefore, gaming machine manufacturers are keen to devise games and/or game features which are popular with the players as a mechanism for improving sales, retaining customers and attracting new customers.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0004] According to a first aspect of the invention, there is provided a gaming machine having a display and a game controller arranged to control images of symbols displayed on the display, the game controller being arranged to play a game wherein at least one random event is caused to be displayed on the display and, if a predefined winning event occurs, the machine awards a prize, the gaming machine further comprising a selector applicable to a game feature where, upon a trigger condition occurring in a base game, a player is afforded an opportunity of predicting an outcome of the feature and, if the player's prediction is correct, a bonus is awarded to the player.

[0005] By allowing the player to predict the outcome of a game feature, the player is, effectively, selecting their desired volatility of the outcome of the game feature.

[0006] The game feature may be a series of free games. The outcome in respect of which the player can make the prediction may constitute one of a number of possible outcomes of game features. For example, the outcome may be the occurrence of a particular

symbol during the playing of the series of free games constituting the game feature. Instead, the outcome may be a prediction of an amount won during the game feature.

[0007] The bonus which is awarded may be related to the degree of difficulty of achieving the outcome. More particularly, the higher the degree of difficulty of achieving an outcome, the greater the bonus that is awarded if the player's prediction is correct.

[0008] The display may include a meter for displaying information related to the outcome. Thus, if the game feature is a series of free games and the outcome on which the player makes a prediction is the collection of a number of symbols, a part of the display means, at least during the playing of the game feature, may include a meter which is incremented each time one of the symbols appears during the playing of the free games. Preferably, the symbols could appear anywhere in the display and need not occur on a bought payline.

[0009] The selector may be a touch screen implemented device for enabling the player to select one of a number of icons relating to potential game feature outcomes.

[0010] The bonus which is awarded may be multiplied by the number of credits bet in the underlying base game.

[0011] According to a second aspect of the invention, there is provided a method of playing a game on a gaming machine, the gaming machine having a display and being controlled by a game controller arranged to control images displayed on the display, the gaming machine including a selector applicable to a game feature and the method including, upon a trigger condition occurring in a base game, affording a player an opportunity of predicting an outcome of the feature and, if the player's prediction is correct, awarding a bonus to the player.

[0012] The method may include implementing the game feature as a series of free games.

[0013] Further, the method may include rendering the outcome in respect of which the player can make the prediction as one of a number of possible outcomes of game features. Thus, for example, the method may include rendering the outcome as the occurrence of a particular symbol during the playing of the series of free games constituting the game feature. Instead, the method may include rendering the outcome as a prediction of an amount won during the game feature.

[0014] The method may include relating the bonus which is awarded to the degree of difficulty of achieving the outcome. The higher the degree of difficulty of achieving an outcome, the greater the bonus that is awarded if the player's prediction is correct.

[0015] The method may include displaying information related to the outcome on a meter of the display.

[0016] Still further, the method may include implementing the selector as a touch screen implemented device for enabling the player to select one of a number of icons relating to potential game feature outcomes.

[0017] The method may include multiplying the bonus which is awarded by the number of credits bet in the underlying base game.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0018] The invention is now described by way of example with reference to the accompanying diagrammatic drawings in which:

[0019] Figure 1 shows a perspective view of a gaming machine, in accordance with an embodiment of the invention;

[0020] Figure 2 shows a block diagram of a control circuit of the gaming machine;

[0021] Figure 3 shows a screen display of a base game of a game, also in accordance with an embodiment of the invention, played on the gaming machine of Figure 1;

[0022] Figure 4 shows an initial screen display of a game feature of the game following the base game;

[0023] Figure 5 shows a screen display during the playing of the game feature;

Figure 6 shows a screen display at the end of the game feature; and

[0024] Figure 7 shows a flow chart of the game played on the gaming machine of Figure 1.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

[0025] In Figure 1, reference numeral 10 generally designates a gaming machine, including a game, in accordance with the invention. The machine 10 includes a console 12 having a display means in the form of a video display unit 14 on which a game 16 is played, in use. The video display unit 14 may be implemented as a cathode ray screen device, a liquid crystal display, a plasma screen, or the like. The game 16 is a spinning reel game which simulates the rotation of a number of spinning reels 18. A midtrim 20 of the machine 10 houses a keypad 22 containing buttons for enabling a player to play the game 16. The

midtrim 20 also houses a credit input mechanism 24 including a coin input chute 24.1 and a bill collector 24.2.

[0026] The machine 10 includes a top box 26 on which artwork 28 is carried. The artwork 28 includes paytables, details of bonus awards, etc.

[0027] A coin tray 30 is mounted beneath the console 12 for cash payouts from the machine 10.

[0028] Referring to Figure 2 of the drawings, a control means or control circuit 32 is illustrated. A program which implements the game and user interface is run on a processor 34 of the control circuit 32. The processor 34 forms part of a controller 36 that drives the screen of the video display unit 14 and that receives input signals from sensors 38. The sensors 38 include sensors associated with the keypad 22 and touch sensors mounted in the screen of the video display unit 14. The controller 36 also receives input pulses from the mechanism 24 to determine whether or not a player has provided sufficient credit to commence playing. The mechanism 24 may, instead of the coin input chute 24.1 or the bill collector 24.2, or in addition thereto, be a credit card reader (not shown) or any other type of validation device.

[0029] Finally, the controller 36 drives a payout mechanism 40 which, for example, may be a coin hopper for feeding coins to the coin tray 30 to make a pay out to a player when the player wishes to redeem his or her credit.

[0030] In Figure 3 of the drawings, reference numeral 50 generally designates a screen display of a base game 52 of the game 16 played on the gaming machine 10. The game 16 is a spinning reel game having a video representation of five spinning reels 18. It is assumed that the game 16 has three paylines on which the player can bet marked as numeral "1", "2" and "3" in Figure 3 of the drawings. It is to be noted from abet meter 54 in the display 50 that the player has bet on all three paylines.

[0031] In the screen display 50, three roundel symbols 56 are displayed in a scatter configuration. The symbols 56 are scatter symbols and the occurrence of three of the symbols 56 results in the triggering of a game feature of the game 16. The game feature is a series of free games, for example, fifteen free games.

[0032] The game feature allows the player to predict what will happen during the free games of the game feature. A bonus prize is awarded if the player's prediction is correct.

[0033] The game 16 and, in particular, the game feature has an aviation theme, hence the roundel scatter symbols 56.

[0034] When the trigger condition occurs in the base game 52, the screen display 50 changes to a screen display 60 as shown in Figure 4 of the drawings. The screen display 60 comprises a selection of possible outcomes 62. The player chooses one of the outcomes 62 by touching the appropriate part of the screen of the video display unit 14 or by pressing one of the buttons of the keypad 22 of the gaming machine 10. A message "Choose your Mission" 64 is also displayed. In the game feature illustrated the possibilities are as follows:

- collect 5 or more "plane" symbols to win a bonus of 15 credits;
- collect 10 or more "plane" symbols to win a bonus of 30 credits;
- collect 15 or more "plane" symbols to win a bonus of 140 credits;
- collect 20 or more "plane" symbols to win a bonus of 400 credits; and
- collect 25 or more "plane" symbols to win a bonus of 1000 credits.

[0035] It will be noted that the more bonus symbols (the "plane" symbols) which need to be collected the higher the bonus which is awarded. Thus, the player has the opportunity to select their desired volatility of the game feature and, if the player's prediction is correct, the bonus amount is awarded to the player. Thus, the player can predict that fewer bonus symbols will occur in the playing of the series of free games with a lower bonus prize being awarded. Instead, the player can predict that a larger number of bonus symbols will occur during the playing of the series of free games with a higher bonus prize being paid if the player's prediction is correct.

[0036] It is also to be noted in Figure 4 of the drawings that the bonus prize which is awarded is multiplied by the number of credits wagered in the base game 52. Therefore, because the player was playing one credit per line on all three paylines in the base game 52 of the game 16, the bonus award will be multiplied by three. Thus, as illustrated in Figure 4 of the drawings, each indicated bonus award is the base award multiplied by the number of credits wagered.

[0037] The player commences the game feature by selecting the appropriate outcome 62. It is assumed that the player has selected "Mission 1" by touching that icon on the screen display 60. Figure 5 shows a screen display 66 after a first free game of the series of free games of the game feature. Two "plane" symbols 68 were spun up in the first free game and a bonus symbol meter 70 in the display 66 is incremented by two as illustrated.

[0038] As indicated above, the game feature comprises a series of fifteen free games. Figure 6 shows a screen display 72 at the end of the series of free games. As described above, it is assumed that the player selected the first outcome where fifteen credits,

multiplied by the number of credits wagered, i.e. 45 credits, is awarded for the player correctly predicting the outcome of the series of free games.

[0039] Because the player had to collect five or more "plane" symbols 68 but the player actually collected 11 "plane" symbols as shown on the bonus symbol meter 70 in Figure 6 of the drawings, the bonus of 45 credits is awarded but is added to a win meter 76. This is accompanied by a message 74 on the screen of the screen display 72. The game feature and the game 16 are then at an end.

[0040] In the examples set out above, the outcome which the player predicts is the minimum number of special symbols, the bonus symbols, that will occur during the series of free games constituting the game feature. The bonus prize awarded changes depending on the difficulty of achieving the prediction.

[0041] In other implementations of the invention, there could be multiple symbols which increment the meter 70 and/or symbols which increment the meter 70 by different amounts.

[0042] Still another implementation of the game feature could be the prediction of the amount won during a game or series of free games of a game feature. Thus, a series of free games may be awarded on the occurrence of a trigger condition in an underlying base game. A second screen appears displaying five options. The player chooses one of the options by touching the screen overlying that option or using one of the buttons on the keypad 22 of the gaming machine 10. The options could, for example, be as follows:

- a free game win of 10 credits or more wins a bonus of 15 credits;
- a free game win of 25 credits or more wins a bonus of 40 credits;
- a free game win of 50 credits or more wins a bonus of 100 credits;
- a free game win of 75 credits or more wins a bonus of 250 credits; and
- a free game win of 100 credits or more wins a bonus of 500 credits.

[0043] Once again, the bonus amount is multiplied by the number of credits bet in the underlying base game. For example, if twenty lines were being played then if the player had selected the first option and had correctly predicted the outcome a bonus of 300 credits would be awarded. The bonus could be awarded for each free game during the series of free games or for the sum of the credits won during the playing of all of the free games of the game feature.

[0044] Accordingly, it is an advantage of the invention that a game feature is provided which enables a player to predict an outcome in the game feature where, the lower

of the likelihood of the outcome being achieved, the higher the prize awarded. Thus, the player can select an easier outcome with a lower bonus award being made or a more difficult outcome with a higher bonus award being made if the prediction is correct. This will enhance the enjoyment of the player in playing the game.

[0045] It will be appreciated by persons skilled in the art that numerous variations and/or modifications may be made to the invention as shown in the specific embodiments without departing from the spirit or scope of the invention as broadly described. The present embodiments are, therefore, to be considered in all respects as illustrative and not restrictive.